

Becoming a Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design

Introduction

The Urban Design Group Chair, and its Executive committee, in response to a resolution made at the 2007 AGM, has developed the new distinction of *Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design*. This will offer the identity and status that many professionals have long sought. UDG members with this distinction commit themselves to promoting high standards of urban design and they receive an affiliation that has international value.

Since being founded in 1978, the UDG has played a major role in putting urban design on professional and political agendas. There have been major successes and a transformation in the quality of existing and new development. However a great deal of development is still badly designed. More than three quarters of all planning applications in the UK are prepared by someone with no design training. Much development is designed or planned by people with little idea of how to work in an urban context. The UDG's new mission is to gear up the urban design movement to meet the challenge of overcoming these shortcomings.

The UDG is committed to:

- Improving the professional status of urban design and urban designers.
- Giving urban design an effective voice in government and the professions.
- Raising standards in urban design practice.
- Developing the international network of urban designers

Membership of the Urban Design Group

The UDG is as welcoming as it has always been to the broadest range of people committed to urban design. Membership of the UDG is open to all who are committed to the group's principles (see below). In addition to the new Recognised Practitioner category of membership, there are still the other categories of UDG membership:

- standard individual member
- student or unwaged member
- practice
- local authority
- library member

Membership benefits

All members of the UDG receive these benefits:

- Urban Design (quarterly), the leading journal in its field
- Events, seminars, conferences and overseas study tours at reduced rates
- Regional events and activities
- Email newsletter with information about news, research, events and jobs in urban design
- Thirty per cent discount on subscriptions to RUDI (Resource for Urban Design Information).

In addition, Practice members of the UDG benefit from

- having an entry in Urban Design's Practice Index and a listing on the website (www.udg.org.uk)
- Discounts on recruitment services.
- Opportunities for inclusion in the Urban Design Directory (extra cost).

Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design

Suitably experienced professionals can apply to become Recognised Practitioners in Urban Design. The distinction provides a wide range of professionals with a valued affiliation (in many cases an additional one), proclaiming their commitment to, and experience of urban design. Being a Recognised Practitioner will give professionals a sense of identity; greater influence on professional practice and public policy; and a stronger sense of common purpose.

Recognised Practitioners are professionals with a wide range of skills and experience of designing in an urban context.

They may be from a wide range of backgrounds including architecture, building conservation, engineering and transportation, landscape architecture, planning, development control, surveying, regeneration and development. Many of the new generation of professionals have more than one professional affiliation, and they expect and are required to develop new skills and areas of expertise throughout their career.

The small print

What is required to be a Recognised Practitioner

The distinction of Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design is open to anyone who meets all of the following criteria:

Commitment Required

The individual should be committed to the principles of the UDG:

The principles of the Urban Design Group

- Context: relating urban change to the best of what already exists.
- Diversity: encouraging the variety that enlarges the interest or choices a place can offer.
- Equity: making places (and their facilities and amenities) accessible to people beyond the owner and immediate users.
- Stewardship: taking a broad and long-term view of the costs and benefits of any change, and understanding what makes towns and cities sustainable.
- Empowerment: building the sense of identity of the people who live and work in a place, their involvement in caring for its fabric and character, and their capacity to influence the forces that shape the environment.

Experience and Education Required

The applicant will have had at least five years experience spending the majority of their working time undertaking at least four of following roles (taken from the Urban Design Alliance's Capacitycheck) or other activities that the UDG may be willing to accept as part of the work of an urban designer); reducing to three year's experience if they have an MA or Diploma in urban design or an equivalent qualification. Applicants with other different qualifications and professional backgrounds will be considered,

A wide range of different combinations of education and experience is acceptable



Categories of experience (from Capacitycheck)

Category	
1	<i>C1 Carrying out urban design studies and appraisals</i>
2	<i>C2 Preparing urban design policy, guidance and statements</i>
3	<i>C3 Masterplanning</i> + <i>C5 Communicating design in two dimensions (by hand or computer) and C6 Communicating design in three dimensions (by hand or computer)</i>
4	<i>C4 Designing</i> + <i>C5 Communicating design in two dimensions (by hand or computer) and C6 Communicating design in three dimensions (by hand or computer)</i>
5	<i>C7 Providing urban design advice</i>
6	<i>C8 Managing urban design processes</i>
7	<i>C9 Promoting placemaking</i>
<i>Or other activities that the UDG may be willing to accept as part of the work of a practitioner in urban design</i>	

The Urban Design Group welcomes people who work in urban design from a wide range of different backgrounds and recognises that they will have had different career paths and work histories. So the requirements above are a guide, each application will be judged on its own merits. We invite applicants to make their best case in the application form.

Supporting information

Applicants should provide a summary of their experience on the application form, demonstrating how they fulfil the requirements.

Sponsors

The form needs to be signed by two sponsors:

One sponsor should be a UDG Recognised Practitioner, a practitioner of similar standing, or members of the UDG Executive Committee (see the UDG website for the current list of Executive members or phone the UDG Office 020 7250 0892 for advice).

One should normally be a current or recent employer, (or a senior colleague in the case of practitioners who are also employers.)

Interviews

The UDG Membership Panel may call applicants for Recognised Practitioner status for interview, but this will not usually be necessary.

Designatory letters

At present, the UDG does not award designatory letters to be used after your name. However, it is permissible to employ the words 'Recognised Practitioner of the Urban Design Group', or similar, on your CV.

The UDG does not permit members or Recognised Practitioners to use the UDG logo on their headed paper

Membership and fee

Recognition will be renewable on an annual basis for a fee of £80 (subject to yearly review), including membership of the UDG at no extra cost. Individuals who are already paid-up UDG members can upgrade to recognised Practitioner status for an additional £40.

Unpaid subscriptions

The status of a Recognised Practitioner will lapse if a due subscription is unpaid after three months. An additional sum equivalent to one year's subscription will be payable before Recognised Practitioner status can be renewed.

Hardship - Unemployment or illness Where a recognised practitioner obtains no work for a significant period, on renewal they may apply for a reduced subscription.

Renewal of membership

Continuing professional development

Renewal will be automatic, providing practitioners undertake to complete five days of appropriate CPD each year, and to keep brief records. The UDG has confidence that professionals will be able to judge for themselves what is and is not appropriate to their needs.

Commitment

Once recognised, practitioners should consider themselves as leading players in urban design: actively encouraging awareness, promoting best practice through the example they set in their own work, and by their encouragement of others, including colleagues, members of the public and politicians.

Recognised practitioners will be invited to send in very brief details of recent projects, initiatives, and activities when renewing their annual subscriptions. This will be of great help in inspiring future events and initiatives, and obtaining ideas for future editions of Urban Design and other publications.

The work of an urban designer

What is urban design?

Urban design is the process of shaping the setting for life in cities, towns and villages: it is the art of making places. It involves the design of the public realm, landscape, spaces, and the interrelationship with buildings and groups of buildings. It entails the establishment of frameworks and processes that facilitate successful development.

What is an urban designer?

An urban designer needs a broad understanding of the components of successful places. A comprehensive list of the skill areas is contained in the Urban Design Alliance's Capacitycheck:

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Foundations of Urban Design

- A1 The objectives of urban design and the qualities of successful places
- A2 Collaborative and participative processes
- A3 How design relates to different spatial scales
- A4 The role of urban design in local government

- A5 The other systems and agencies that shape the built environment
- A6 How to use, read and interpret urban design documents and plans
- A7 Implementing urban design
- A8 Caring for the place

Urban design Topics

Form and context

- B1 Natural setting
- B2 Legislative and policy context
- B3 Historical, cultural, social and economic context
- B4 Land ownership
- B5 Urban form
- B6 Types of building
- B7 Materials
- B8 Greenspace and landscape
- B9 Movement and inclusive access
- B10 Parking

People

- B11 Emotional needs
- B12 Sensory experience
- B13 Factors contributing to health
- B14 Safety and security

Servicing

- B15 Water
- B16 Energy
- B17 Telecommunications
- B18 Waste
- B19 Utilities

Management

- B20 Management and maintenance

The skills needed include an understanding of the planning system, of urbanism, sustainability and sustainable communities, of development economics, context appraisal, movement analysis, infrastructure, regeneration strategy, conservation, landscape design, site planning, masterplanning, public and stakeholder collaboration, implementation, project funding, project management, graphic communication, negotiation, and how to formulate design policy and write guidance. A practitioner in urban design needs an ability to communicate orally, graphically and in writing; and have a commitment to working across professional boundaries. A professional without such qualities is unlikely to be able to get to grips with the full complexities of the urban design and development process.

Roles in urban design

The Recognised practitioner designation is a mark of experience and achievement, not merely of knowledge and skills. Admission is based on experience in carrying out roles in urban design.

The list below (taken from the Urban Design Alliance's Capacitycheck) sets out roles that are carried out by urban designers (who may or may not call themselves that). No urban designer will have all these as specialist skills. The bullet points are examples of what these roles might include the following:

Role	Some Examples
C1 Carrying out urban design studies and appraisals	Carrying out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban morphology studies • Policy reviews • Site and context appraisals • Urban character assessments • Conservation area and building appraisals. • Transport impact assessments • Public space appraisals • Feasibility appraisal • Placechecks
C2 Preparing urban design policy, guidance and statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing urban design policies for a local development framework • Monitoring and reviewing design policy and guidance • Preparing vision statements • Preparing urban design codes • Preparing and illustrating urban design guidance • Preparing design guides • Preparing design and access statements • Preparing development briefs • Preparing urban design frameworks • Drawing up planning and design principles for specific areas or sites • Preparing design statements • Preparing public realm strategies • Facilitating local or village design statements
C3 Masterplanning C4 Designing C5 Communicating design in two dimensions (by hand or computer) C6 Communicating design in three dimensions (by hand or computer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing the movement network for an area or site • Designing development layouts or producing indicative layouts for specific sites • Preparing masterplans • Preparing site drawings • Preparing presentations
C7 Providing urban design advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising prospective planning applicants on design aspects of development • Advising elected politicians and local government officers on design aspects of development • Supporting and advising a design champion • Giving design advice on planning applications as part of the development control function of a local authority • Advising other local government services on urban design matters • Advising on the form and content of design statements as part of the submission requirements to accompany planning applications • Preparing statements of evidence and giving evidence on urban design matters on appeals into planning applications and development plan inquiries • Advising the public on urban design matters

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with a range of professionals across local authority service areas • Participating in community consultations.
C8 Managing urban design processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating with planning applicants and their agents • Managing the process of public and stakeholder involvement • Setting briefs for and managing design consultants • Negotiating with public service professionals in submitting design statements • Managing public and stakeholder involvement in preparing public realm strategies, development briefs and urban design frameworks • Planning and organising urban design competitions • Setting briefs for and managing design consultants • Enabling and managing the development process • Formulating and setting urban design performance indicators • Collaborating with public service professionals on the management, design and maintenance of the public realm.
C9 Promoting placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up and administering a local design awards scheme • Setting up and administering a local design panel. • Acting as an advocate for placemaking

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